

## WHEN IN A TRIAL (Part 1) - Acts 16:25-26 – August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008

- We began Acts chapter 16 with Paul and Silas setting out from Antioch on what would be the Apostle Paul's 2nd missionary Journey.
- A young man named Timothy joins them while they're in Lystra, then; a physician by the name of Luke joins them while they're in Troas.
- When the Holy Spirit forbids them from preaching anywhere in Asia Minor, their missionary team leaves for the continent of Europe.
- They end up in Philippi; instead of going to a synagogue, as they had always done, they find a women's prayer group along the river.
- There they meet a wealthy and successful businesswoman by the name of Lydia, and God opens her heart to Paul's message.
- Shortly after that, Paul casts a demon out of a young girl who was enslaved by greedy men using her demon possession for their profit.
- This infuriates them, so they have Paul and Silas, as Jews, beaten mercilessly and thrown into a maximum security prison under guard.
- Now, while in this jail, which was more like a dungeon, we're going to witness this Roman jailer come to the Lord and get saved.
- One poignantly noted that Lydia, a tender heart, then the girl, with a tormented heart, and now a jailer with a tough heart, all get saved.
- Truly, it doesn't matter who you are, the free gift of eternal life paid for in full by Jesus Himself, is available to you, for the asking.
- I suppose this may be one reason we have this detailed account of how these people and their families came to Christ here in Acts 16.
- That being said; I want us to sort of round a corner and take a closer look at how Paul and Silas respond to what's happened to them.
- To me, the text we have before us is perhaps one of the most, if not the most, amazing and astonishing passages in the entire book!
- Perhaps another reason we have this detailed account, is to provide us with practical instruction when in a similar situation.
- It seems that woven into the very fabric of the text are several clues for us to discern what it is that we can do when in a trial.
- This is part one of a teaching titled; "When in a Trial." In this chapter, we'll discover specific ways we can respond to adversity.
- I must caution you that what we are about to learn, may go against everything you feel especially for those of you in a trial right now.
- It's been said that all of us are either right now in adversity, just coming out of adversity, or are about to experience adversity.

### 1. Pray and praise God (Verse 25)

- 25 **About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God**, and the other prisoners were listening to them.
- v25 Tells us that at about midnight, Paul and Silas, who are chained in this dungeon, pray and sing hymns within earshot of the others.
- Imagine this; in the midst of their pain and peril in this prison, they pray and praise God
  - If this was me, I wouldn't have called on the Lord; I would have called on my attorney. Perhaps you're more spiritual than I am!

"Instead of cursing men, they blessed God."

John Stott

"They turned as one has well said, even a porch of death and a gate of hell into a sanctuary and a gate of heaven. With bleeding backs and in a comfortless posture they sang like angels, and made the grim walls ring again. No groans and moans were heard, but a nocturnal jubilate such as that dungeon never echoed with before."

Charles Spurgeon

- Question: How could they have such joy and praise God?
- Answer: They knew it was a blessing to be persecuted for righteousness.

**Matthew 5:10-12** Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. NIV

**James 5:13** Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. NIV

**James 5:16b** ...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. KJV

**James 1:2-4** 2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. NIV

**1 Peter 1:6-7** 6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that your faith-of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire-may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. NIV

### 2. Stay until God says go (Verse 26)

26 Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose.

- v26 Suddenly, there's a massive earthquake that shakes the very prison foundation, opening the doors and loosing everyone's chains.
- Isn't this interesting; "when I pray to God and praise God, doors that were once closed fly open, and chains that once bound fly off."
  - What's interesting is that as soon as everyone's chains came loose, instead of Paul and Silas running and escaping, they stay there.
  - Again, maybe you're more spiritual than me, but I would be so out of there! This earthquake is a miraculous jailbreak! Praise God!

- Question: Why in the world did they stay instead of running?
- Answer: I believe God showed them in their prayer to Him and praise of Him, that He had a plan and purpose for their imprisonment.
- Perhaps Paul and Silas were looking around to see who was going to come to salvation because of their tribulation.

One commentator said it this way; "In not escaping, they showed tremendous discernment. The *circumstances* said, 'escape.' But love said, 'Stay for the sake of this one soul.' They were not guided merely by circumstances, but by what love compelled."